

Letter From The Editor

Welcome to all of our new members, volunteers, and donors. The Garden Grapevine is published every two months to keep you up to date on the latest happenings in the Garden. The newsletter features not only the latest news, but also coming events and spotlights volunteers and their projects. We encourage Board Members, Advisors, and Volunteers to contribute articles to the newsletter.

To make an announcement or contribute an article, send it to Palmcabinman@gmail.com.

Please keep article concise, as space is limited.

Dr. John Rossi

Founder and Resident Botanist



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The Palmvilion looks and feels totally different with its new roof!

Latest Happenings At The Garden

An explosion of new construction, clearing, planting, signage, statue placement, and other things have been happening at the Garden in the last two months. We finally have **a roof on our Palmvilion** so that the bands playing there will not be disturbed by a brief rain shower, and visitors will find a cool retreat from the sun on a hot day!

A new Pergola has been finished! The beautiful cedar pergola is located in the courtyard area of the Garden and will provide even more covered seating.

An incredible flurry of activity has been occurring on **Tiki Key**, where the old dock has been repaired, a new dock and an attaching wraparound deck has been added. Also, the stairs going up the Crow's Nest have been replaced, ramps have been added and everything has been freshly



Our new Cedar Pergola is finished!



Tiki Key, our little tropical island!

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painted. In addition, trails have been widened, signage has been placed, and the Green Thumbs have planted hundreds of bromeliads! Come visit our little tropical island paradise, it's definitely one of a kind!

Elsewhere in the Garden, **five colorful new metal park benches** have been added near trails and peaceful locations where visitors might want to sit and relax.

A major new planting is occurring along Sunshine Trail, which is the trail people use to after visiting the Nature Preserve. This planting includes sun loving plants such as agaves, yuccas, cacti, certain bromeliads, and some very rare old cycads. Some of these cycads have steely blue or silvery leaves and they are quite stunning in the bright sunlight! For those not familiar with cycads, they are a primitive group of cone bearing plants that look like palms, but are actually more closely related to pine trees! They have been around since the age of dinosaurs! See the article about cycads by Libby Luedeke in the July Newsletter.



Amy and Dana working hard on Sunshine Trail!

Within the Garden, **three large new ferns have been donated!** One of these, a beautiful Staghorn Fern, has been gifted by our Head Botanist, Jane Villa-Lobos. Two others, Elkhorn Ferns, were donated by Nancy Kehoe and these are our very first Elkhorns. In this case, the Elkhorn Ferns we received are a longer, thinner leafed variant of the Staghorn Fern, *Platycerium*

bifurcatum. Some argue that the term Elkhorn Fern should be reserved for a different species with broader leaves, which are terrestrial, not epiphytic, as are the Staghorns. However, the most common usage of the name Elkhorn Fern is for the longer leafed varieties of the Staghorn Fern. They are still stunning, large tropical plants that make an impact. They are found naturally in Java, New Guinea, Northern Australia, and Lord Howe Island.

In other areas, **a beautiful statue of St. Francis, the Patron Saint of Animals**, has been donated to the Garden by Rich and Sherri Lindberg, and is prominently displayed in the open area near the Asian collection. Rich and Sherri also donated **a bronze-colored Buddha Head**, which is on display near the Palmvilion.

With the apparent success of our first palm from New Zealand, *Rhopalostylis cheesemani*, three more species from New Zealand have been added. These are *R. baueri*, *R. sapida*, and *R. oceana*. The common name for this group of palms is the "Feather Duster" or "Shaving Brush" palm because of the unique shape of their crowns. Planting them here in Northern Florida is experimental because New Zealand is much cooler than Florida. There has not been much success in Southern Florida with this group of palms; however, they may do well in Northern Florida because of our slightly cooler climate.

Spotlight On A Volunteer

We have quite a few great volunteers, so it is hard to pick one, but **Dena Shafer** deserves special thanks this month for all the hard work she has been doing. One of the most critical roles she plays in the Garden, is as a "Chief Propagator." She is constantly planting cuttings and sometimes whole plants that we receive

as donations, in order to grow them out for spots in the Garden or Nursery! She also helps rescue plants that haven't thrived where they have been planted, so they can be tried in another area of the Garden. One of her special areas of interest has been the Cactus Gardens and she has worked hard planting, weeding, and placing pretty pots full of spiny things in those areas. Thank you so much Dena, for all you do!



Indian Cliff Date Palm near the entrance.

Plant of the Month

by Libby Luedeke

Welcome once again to the Plant of the Month! This is always a challenge as there are so many wonderful plants in the Garden, but I chose a stunner and a personal favorite of mine that you will find near the main building. I am sure you will find it. The *Phoenix rupicola*, a beautiful tropical palm that is moderately hardy and, in my opinion, stunningly beautiful. Short of a side of extremely painful sharp spines at the base of the leaves, it is a great palm! Also known as the Cliff Date Palm, its native range is from the eastern Himalayas to West Bengal in India. It appears to love wet, warm forests

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Plant of the Month

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but is also found in more open areas on steep rocky hillsides, ravines, and cliffs from an altitude of about 300 to 1220 meters (900 to 3700 feet).

Generally, it only grows to about 20 feet tall in cultivation, which is relatively short compared to its relatives. It ultimately has a nice clean trunk that doesn't retain the old leaves. The fronds are long, up to 10 feet, and it has a nice, rounded canopy making it a very graceful looking palm. You can eat the purplish fruit, but it is very thin. In many areas it prefers sun, but does well in shade, and once established, is fairly drought tolerant. Ours has handled lows in the 20s with some burn but it recovers quickly. It is definitely an ornament for your garden!

Editor's Note: *I couldn't agree with Libby more. This is a stunningly beautiful and tropical looking palm with glossy dark green, soft (except for the spines at the base) and very graceful leaves. Many have said that it is the most beautiful palm in the genus Phoenix (the date palms). In Florida, I do think it prefers a little more shade than in its native range. There are several large and medium sized specimens throughout the Garden. In addition, we have a few small ones for sale in our Nursery.*



A few smaller Indian Cliff Date Palms are for sale in our Nursery, like that shown near the entrance.

Animal Sightings

With a change in weather, animals often begin moving. Sometimes with intense rain, combined with the heat of summer, many amphibians are stimulated to repeat the migration back to the place they were born and repeat the ancient cycle. Bullfrogs, Pig Frogs, Bronze Frogs and a variety of tree frogs have been singing regularly throughout the summer, and eggs, tadpoles and little froglets and toadlets have been numerous. The warm, wet weather has also brought out a variety of reptiles, including many turtles, lizards and snakes. Marsh bunnies, squirrels, and birds also abound in the Garden! Children may find a veritable small animal treasure trove here!



A baby treefrog hides on a palm leaf.



The very shy, but beautiful Florida Box Turtles are common in the Garden.



A very alert black racer raises its head up high to look for possible prey and watch out for hawks!



Marsh Rabbits are often seen along the edges of the forest.



Black Capped Chickadee singing from some palm branches. Over 105 species of birds have been discovered in the Garden!



A hummingbird caught in midair visiting one of our pagoda plants!



Beautiful green anoles abound in the Garden!



Yellow Rat Snakes are common in the Garden.

Upcoming Events

Times and events are subject to change due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances. Other events may crop up as well. Check our Facebook page or website regularly to find out when other events will be scheduled or listed events changed.

Saturday, October 5 and Sunday, October 6: The Dog Days of Summer!

The Garden will hold the rescheduled **DOG DAYS** event. For two days, the Garden extends a special welcome to dogs and their families and friends! Dogs can enjoy all the sights and smells of our tropical paradise. *Remember, that your furbaby will need to be kept on a leash and you will be asked to sign a waiver upon admission.*

Saturday, October 19 and Sunday, October 20: One Year Anniversary!

On Saturday the 19th, a great local singer and guitar player, **Brad Edwardson**, will be playing in the Garden from 1:00-3:00 pm. And on Sunday the 20th, **Wild Wonders** will be starting off the entertainment with their great Animal Show at 1:00 pm. Then at 2:00 pm, **Palomino Blonde!** The "blonde" is singer Wendy Petersen, who will be singing from horseback on Gabe, a palomino horse, until 4:00 pm, a one-of-a-kind experience! Food Trucks and a variety of vendors will be available both days. As a special treat for our celebration, we will have **Plein Air Artists** throughout the Garden. You will be able to experience their creativity first hand!



First Anniversary Celebration !!

October 19 & 20th
10am-4pm

Saturday	Sunday
Enjoy bluegrass with Brad Edwardson on guitar 1 - 3pm 	Come see Mike Rossi's Wild Wonders Animal Show 1 - 2pm 
	Meet Gabe and Wendy with the tunes of Palomino Blonde 2-4 pm 
Plein Air artists and various vendors both days!	

Food trucks: Jimmy's BBQ & Mumbai Delights

Our volunteers can't wait to show you all the amazing changes and additions. Tiki Key is open to the public.

Garden tours all day!

Come help us celebrate this beautiful garden made possible by all of your amazing support!

8310 CR 13 S, Hastings 32145 904-540-3294

St. Johns Botanical Garden & Nature Preserve is proud to present:

Doa Days of Summer
October 5-6, 2024
10am - 4pm

We are super dog friendly and want to prove it!

Come for a walk with your pooch along our shaded canopy trails. While your furbaby is sniffing along, you can be enjoying the most beautiful collection of cacti, bromeliads, cycads and palms.

Stop and rest along the way on one of our many benches, chairs and even a garden swing!

Water dishes to be found along your journey.

At the end of your wonderful walk, we'll have baby pools, hoses and shampoo ready so you can give your pup that doggie bath you've been dreading.

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Saturday, November 9 and Sunday, November 10: Veteran's Honor and Food Drive

In Honor of Veterans and in support of St. John's Food Pantry. Everyone who brings a canned good will receive a plant! All our Veterans will receive a plant and will enjoy their 10% discount.

Saturday, December 14 and Sunday, December 15: Festival of Trees!

Watch for details in our November Newsletter.



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Donations

Our Garden needs your help to survive and grow! It is our goal to become one of the best botanical gardens in the Southeastern United States! Imagine that! And imagine it being right here in St. Johns County! What a wonderful thing it would be to preserve this Garden and expand it! Look at all the potential benefits to helping the Garden grow!

1. It would **preserve more green space** in a county that is growing faster than anywhere else in Florida!
2. It would be an **economic boon** for this area and attract people from all over the world! It already has!
3. The Garden could become a fantastic **educational resource** for this area, and **research** conducted here could help guide the direction of landscapers in the future to use new and better water conserving, pest resistant plants!
4. It would become a force for **preservation of endangered species** of plants from all around the world! Research on such things is already underway at the Garden!

Our Garden can't grow without your help! Please make a tax-deductible donation today. And either become a member, renew your membership, or gift someone with one! We need better trails, more benches, better bathrooms, a bridge, a new welcome center and classrooms, a large conservatory, and more staff! We need your help to make this happen!

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, please call us at (904) 553-7563, email us at info@stjohnsbotanicalgarden.org, talk to one of our staff when you visit the Garden, or make a donation online at our website at www.stjohnsbotanicalgarden.org/donate/

ST. JOHNS BOTANICAL GARDEN AND NATURE PRESERVE, Inc.

A Florida Non-Profit Corporation 501(3)(c)

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**AND REMEMBER,
YOU HEARD IT
THROUGH THE
GRAPEVINE!**



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